

Four-war vet

'ordinary guy'

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Herald

JEFFERSONVILLE, Ind. (AP) — The man believed to be the only living American veteran of four wars flies the U.S. flag 24 hours a day from a pole on his front lawn and belongs to "just about every veterans group there is."

"Sort of makes me feel uncomfortable to be singled out," says Frank Kossa. "I'm just an ordinary guy. I'm proud to say I was able to be in the Army, but I don't want to take any glory for being around so long."

During the 60 years he served in the Army, Kossa rose from buck private to colonel. He said he has met every president since Warren Harding and has two congratulatory letters from President Reagan.

Kossa, now 89, says he was a 16-year-old runaway who needed a clean bed, hot food, clothes and a job in 1914 when an Army doctor added a few years to the boy's age so he could enlist at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

He asked to go overseas, but remained at the fort's motor pool during World War I.

After the war, he was discharged, moved to Indiana and went into business, but remained in the reserves and in 1925 was made an officer. One month after World War II broke out, he received his marching orders.

After a stint at Fort Knox, Ky., he was sent to Calcutta, India, in 1943, where he was in charge of petroleum distribution. He stayed there for a year after the war before returning to Indiana and leaving the Army for a second time.

In 1949, Kossa said, an old buddy, Gen. Lewis Hershey, asked him to return to the Army as Selective Service director for Indiana. The Korean War broke out soon afterward and Kossa stayed on, and eventually went to Washington to join Hershey. He did not retire until the end of the Vietnam War.

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